

‘O Ka Leo O Ka Holu ‘Ana: 1

the voice of resiliency: 1

no John Troutman, me ke aloha



‘Iolani Pu‘u
Misa Miele Mandigo Kelly

Mele Haole & Ki'i
by

‘Iolani
Pu‘u

*integrating
ChatGPT for
exploratory
word color
and curious
play*

me ke aloha

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Forward

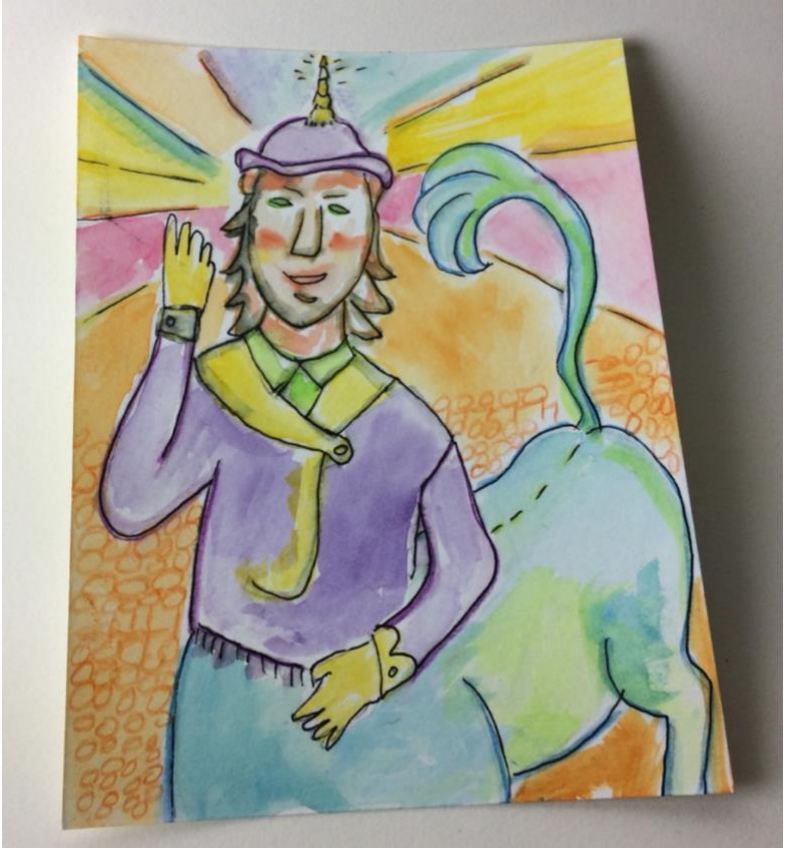
It was in a recent Zoom family session, amongst fellow highly sensitive creative sorts, with similar heart tones, that a suggestion came to me through John. Upon hearing a poetry share, coupled with sharing images a part of my Swedish Death Cleaning beginnings, he suggested that I pair the two: words and images. He articulated that he could see the poem distilled to a single stanza on one page, and an image pairing it on the other. A fellow artist, and a very big supporter of the Hawaiians, this seed immediately sprouted and I took immediate action - an expression of love and gratitude for John, who has enriched our community immeasurably.

It has been on my mental back burner, since tossing in the worker bee buzz early, at 59.5 years of age, to focus solely on well-being, and letting go of all my self-created titles, to be a person with fewer cows, a Ticht Naht Hahn prompt actually. A vision in my mind's eye of creating books from the big body of work called life, as a means of self-reflection, but also, sharing the work in a fresh way.

So, here it is, this start, with ki'i (pictures) from the period when I was juggling growing my dance dream, and working as a receptionist, hence the receptionist series.

A bit humiliating, given my ability, and my education level, but a part of the strategy of pursuing creative imaginings.

Pair a very simple job, that requires very little imagination, and isn't mentally draining, with a sense of life work, with energy to pursue an understanding of the real work, and purpose, as defined by the "soul's code."

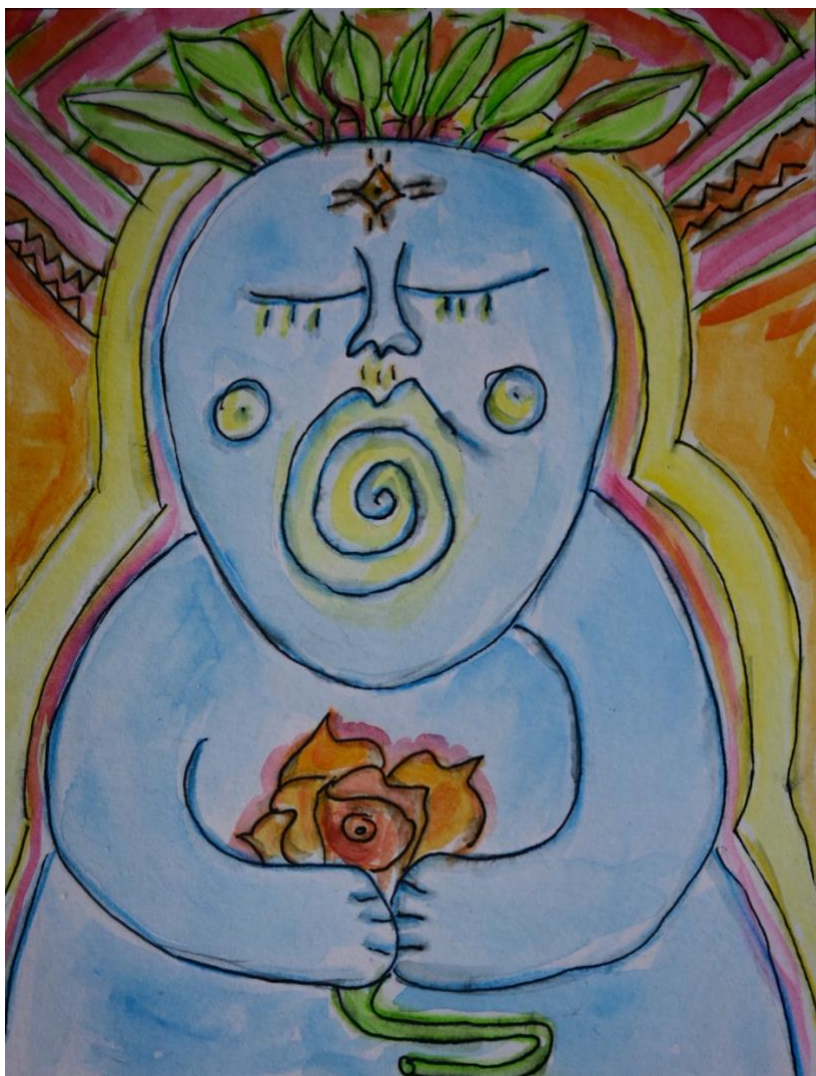


This first poem, is a collaboration with ChatGPT, which is a recent impulse. In my present shed, this mopping up and reflecting, a word salad emerged which I invited Chat to kindly reshape into a Rainer Rilke voice, a poet, I adore, and who was pivotal somehow, in choosing the path I chose. One letter in particular from his tome

“Letters to a Young Poet.”

Sanctuaries of Solace

Within, declared sanctuaries of solace,
In my tender frame's arc, birth to early bloom.
A heritage whispered softly through the ages,
Endures with each fleeting heartbeat's pulse,
Persisting, an ethereal whisper of time.



sing heart sing, from the bosom of bloom

Seated, an ancient mountain's tranquility,
Recalling the tales of tear-stained innocence,
Bleeding back passages, crevices too delicate,
Even fingers shy away from venturing.



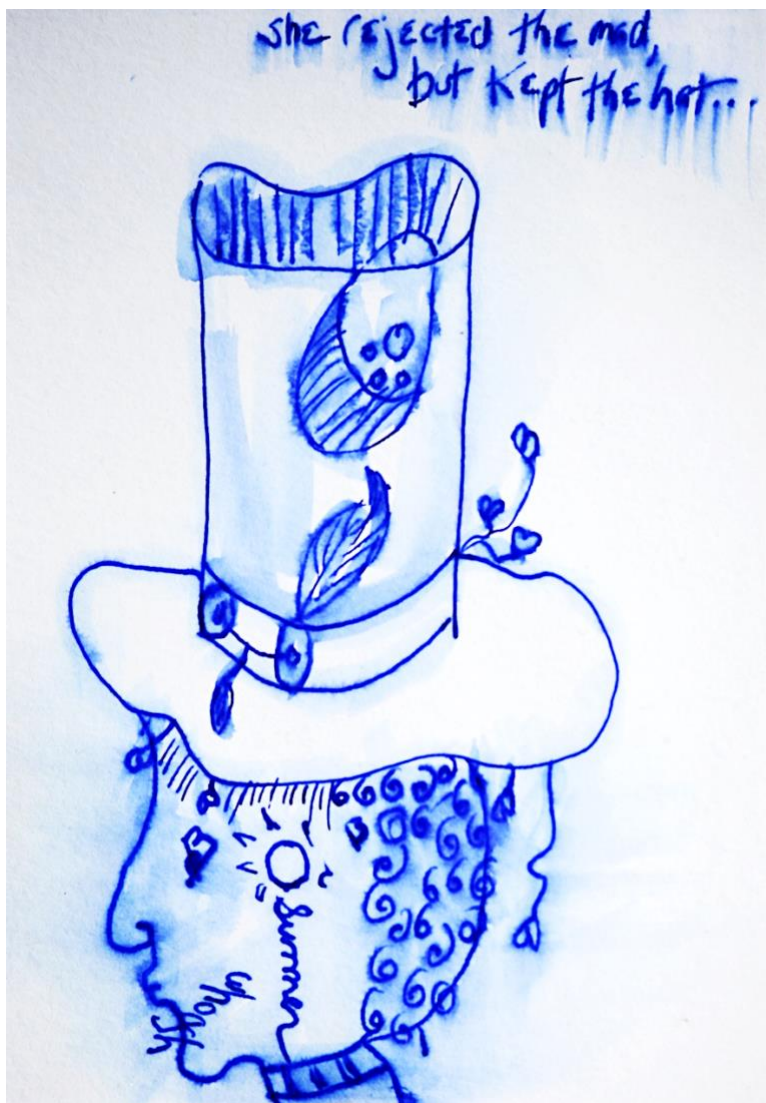
from the brambles within, the entrapped heart sings, a promise of joy

Her voice, a resounding NOOOOOOOOOO,
Ripples through Earth's core, cosmic cry,
A guardian of newborn light, an oath,
Protecting the toddlers, the burgeoning souls,
A vow to shield them from such harm's embrace.



*jiggle, juggle, shake, i as earth quake, and the river runs free in her
veins of innocence...*

She claims her sovereignty in resolute repose,
Summoning her core's wellspring of strength,
Inviting the luminous embrace of healing,
Awaiting, patient, for this sacred moment's emergence.



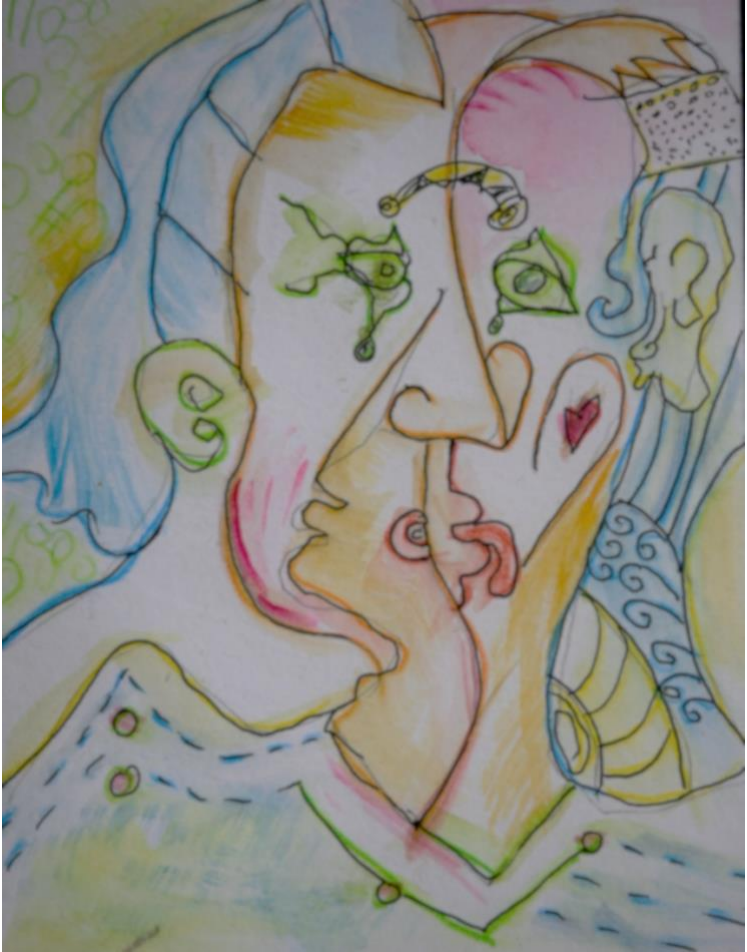
*the ancient magician maker awakens unfurling the alchemy of
healing, yes we say, collectively, yes.*

And arrive it does, a long-awaited dawn,
Radiating, weaving through once empty spaces,
Midback's alignment, a dance with joy,
Laughter finds its echo, gentle chuckles bloom.



lean into the wonder of rock, fish, winged ones, give thanks for the gift of authentic process (this image, I believe, was from a Master study)

Rage courses, a scarlet river ablaze,
Consuming the terrain where shadows reigned,
An aria of liberation, singing truths untamed,
Burning away the falsehoods that clung.



*yes, the odyssey, at times, feels icky, sticky, unbearable, but paddle on
we shall savoring the zing of salt, healing wounds.*

Banish, intruders of corporeal sanctum,
Begone, for your dominion's reign is done,
Reclaimed is this realm, consecrated anew,
With a profound exhale, all returns,
From sender to originator, undoing the transgressions.



*protectors, nurturers, punishers, all simply parts, as the authentic
me/you/us/i witness within a cushion of patience blossoming whole
shedding dead*

And the rage, a tempest of love's depths,
In its embrace, the very soul's architecture,
For love's essence resides in understanding,
To feel, to honor the ripples of experience,
A symphony of emotions, the heart's response.



Apologies linger, forgiveness waits,
Acceptance, the precursor to transformation,
Confess, unburden the weight of secrecy,
Speak your truth to willing ears,
A declaration that shatters deceit's veil.





Lies whispered, seeds of trepidation,
Yet their shadows falter in truth's embrace,
No longer slaves to tales of illusion,
Truth, an elixir of liberation's essence,
No longer captive to untruth's grip.

Lies unravel, truths blossom,
Emergence from deception's embrace,
The lie, a specter vanquished,
Feel the truth's reverberation, an echo,
Shared resonance, a bond of understanding.



Align narratives, weave existence's fabric,
Life's tale of resilience and revelation,
Build the bridge to destiny's embrace,
Where integrity entwines with the tale,
Revealing the brilliance of one's truest path.



*cat, rodent, iris, hats, swim in the memory of Van Gogh, holding
sacred space for all that dare to make marks of courage*

Picture This

*ChatGPT prompt, rewriting the poem in a sardonic/humorous style:
Chat chose David Sedaris (yes... I fiddled with it a bit afterwards)*

Picture This:

She's planted like a mountain,
a human monument to unwavering resolve.

Imagine the great exodus of stories, beliefs, words, and all
that snark, making a break for it from every nook and
cranny of her inter-being.

It's like a clearance sale on the aisle of life – everything
must go, and boy, is it going. Then, out of nowhere, here
comes the grrrrand finale!

pop, whiz, fizz, fart

From deep within, a belly eruption of liquid drama, the
lava lamp of Pele's emotions going bonkers. And just like
that, those pesky textures are toast, sizzled by the heatwave
of epic proportions, the trail of tears nothing more than
cinders of spongy white bread in Webers blue wrap burnt
brown.



and then, the unicorn, this support, always appears, at exactly the right moment comforting school gender woes

"Attention, everyone! This area is now a designated safety zone!" she cries, he cries, we all cry in unison. All exits marked 'safe haven' from birth's debut to the ultimate mic drop. So there we are, lounging in comfort, in cotton comfies, our feet up, sipping giggles, safeguarded from life's little dramas, snorting saviors from our personal cup of introspection balanced on our naked navel channeling Momma, as in earth, as in glades, and in redwood whispers.



Sorry, your pain, yeah, it's a bummer. Seriously, I'd give it a five-star review on the list of sucky human experiences, and wouldn't advise Yelp as a place to reveal your private affairs.

And let's not forget the souvenirs – those pins, those foreign objects that made trespassing an art form. I mean, who invited those guys to the party?



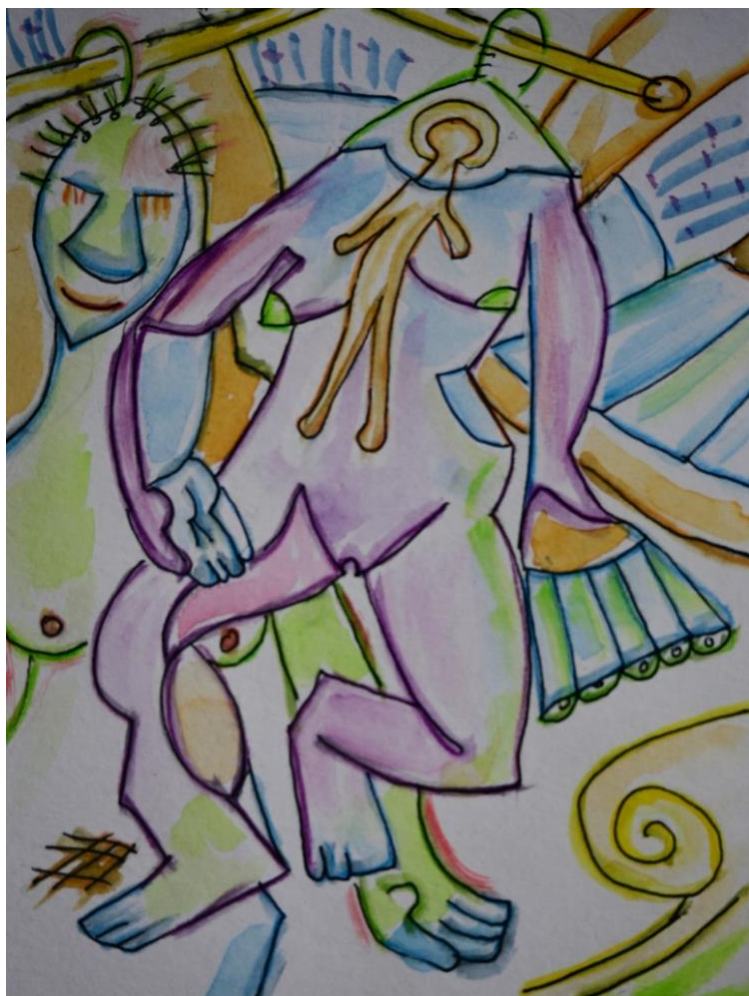
Forgiveness, it's like saying,

"Hey, you can keep the drama, but I'm taking the remote control."

So here we are, waving the banner of resilience, united in a resounding chorus of "no more!"

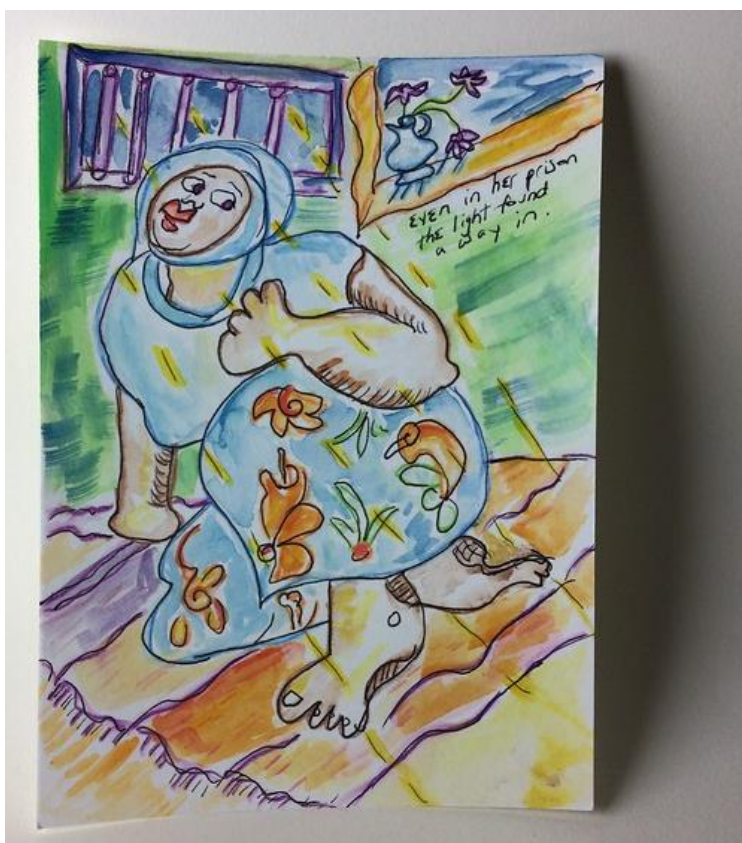
We've got our lines,
our boundaries,
and we're not afraid to use them.

the beginning, before, the end
and the washing cycle begins anew
thanks
to you
and me
and
well
just like that





I planted the past in the present and the process birthed a gift, this sacred circle, friends that, the arrival of happy states springing from this lifestyle of well-being.



Following is the original automatic writing that came from wanting to process the drawing I burned, as a part of a ritual of letting go, in this current “Swedish Death Cleaning” process.

This is what I shared with ChatGPT, and asked using please and thank you for Chat to rewrite the expression in the aforeexpressed styles. I find this process to be helpful in getting out of my own head, with attachment to outcome, and it helps develop an appreciation for different perspectives, cultivating tolerance and respect event. I just

have to say though, as an aside, oh gosh, no, hold that thought, a memory of poetry, and the coming of computers, that precious loss, and my personal bemoaning from the memory of drinking shots of espresso with my wild red headed buddy in Isla Vista while we did derivatives in our head for our calculus class, and ate poetry for snacks, for our shared poetry class, which I received an A+ in (yes, I love that feat, given my unique way of learning, before there were such things as learning diagnoses.)

Safe Zones

the orifices
declared as safe zones
in my little body
aged birth to toddler
and because it is safe then, it ripples into now

safe
safe
safe

S
A
F
E

safe



first gasp, last breath
the canyon answers
she sits solid

like a mountain

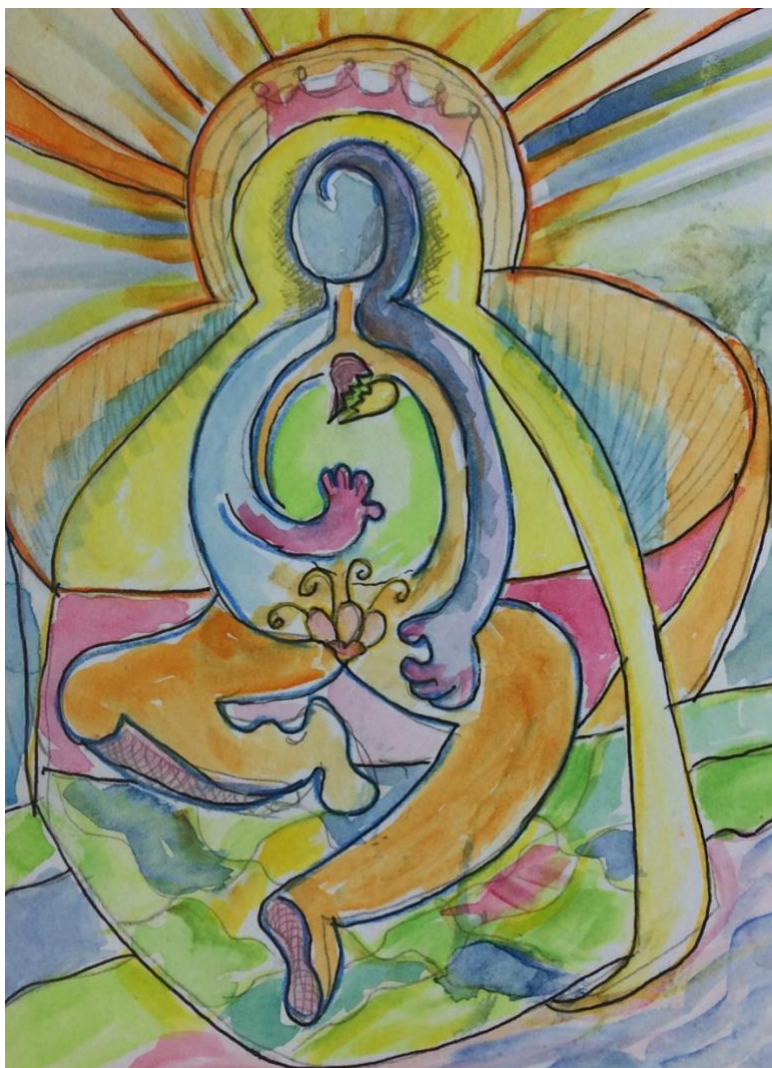
as the mountain of ancient memories carried forward
the memory of crying backsides
and bleeding rectums
holes too small for anything, even fingers
she cries out

NOOOOOOOOOO

the canyon

answers

it reverberates to the core of mother earth,
Papahānaumoku, Gaia



she hears, listens, weeps, for she too knows the pain of
rape, when two-leggeds plunder in ignorance, her body

protect the babies
protect the toddlers
protect our mother even, our grannies,
shut down our wombs and say no more

protection first

say yes to no child ever being harmed in such a way



say it, say yes, whisper it first, then roar, with the heart of your favorite lioness.

she sits, I sit, and in the sitting, we take our power back



the power of the back side
in our solid sit

up from Earth

voices sing, speak, invoke and invite the light
the supportive ones
whoosh comes the healing
it has been waiting just for this moment, this request
and so it comes



it comes, it comes, it comes, and it returns with a smile

the midback clears
the right scapula clears
the small tensions, the large tensions, they clear with the
intendings
the misalignment and ancient tensions unravel
to align with laughter
soft farts as giggles



rage runs as a red river

run

red

rivers

run

the heat scorches the paper, the land, the earth
singeing what seeks to be singed

get out of our bodies

now

you no longer belong here

this is our space alone



with a mighty whoosh we send it all back
to the sender, to the doer
and this rage that must be felt
we give it up
because this is what the whispers from the ocean summer
swim whispers
let go of this anger
channel it into this

rage, as a part of the nature of loving oneself?

to name, feel, and know the appropriate feelings
in response to what had happened

but to not cling, hang on, fester

but let it be as the lava that flows down Pele's back



and forgiveness, forget that!

i am sorry, but forgiveness
can't come without acceptance first,
the fact that it happened, and fessing up.
however you can, fess up, and tell it, tell those secrets,
to whoever will listen
in safe, protective, kind settings
with an abundance of wounded healers present
with those who are here as earth angels
to simply

support



tell those
damn
secrets

prove them wrong

they won't die me or die you if you tell
your body won't turn into concrete
you won't be burned alive in the ceramics kiln, or be
buried alive

they lied to make you afraid

and now, there is no need of telling lies.
or believing lies

what is a lie?

i am not altogether sure, you tell me,
but i know how it feels, and i imagine you do too.
let the truth of your life, your story,
the integrity of your being,
come into perfect alignment

with your most brilliant destiny.



Be you, glorious you, warts, wrinkles, sags, grey hairs, memory lapses, blindsides, opensides, and all.



View from behind the reception desk, the decor, at A&K.

Mo‘olelo Pokole: Short Story

E pili ana kēia hana kahe: about this process.

My arts training I suppose began in my High School classes, a time, I don’t look back at, because of the memory of _____ with my sisters, that thing, those stories, but I find myself stating this fact here. What feels like a fact, in the blank space above, but still, it hides in disbelief, suspended there, in a frame that shouts betrayal, with the frame bedecked with barbed wire, dripping crimson drops, with honey bees and golden dragonflies buzzing about still tending the ancestral wounds, for me, for my sisters, for humanity.

After that, I had a year of arts training working as a nanny, in Paris, after working as a waitress for a year, and using every Sunday possible to either visit museums, splurge with a series of weekend cooking classes at the Cordon Bleu, or, attend jazz dance or pantomime classes.

Digesting those great art museums was the greatest art education ever.

While pursuing my dance and economics degree, I had the opportunity to take a life sculpture class, where the really beautiful outcome of this study resulted in no physical outcome, but a great understanding.

The teacher, C. G., split the teaching scene early, leaving his students alone to sort how to cast their clay sculpted work. He took pictures of my first and last life sized sculpture, and took off for England, leaving us to our own devices.

My attempt, was a massive failure, and the clay sculpture destroyed, breaking my heart a little bit, and pissing me off immensely, because I loved this work. I did, however, carry forward what I was really meant to learn, the lesson, and a roadmap of devotion, and intention, to dedicate my creative path to being of loving service to mother earth, in some wild, whacky, eccentric, and weird way.

At this time I was reading a book by the Kogi Indians, and there was a very sacred understanding that emerged from this reading, that coincided with the act of sculpting, which had much to do with the “feel of truth” resonating in the body, when the eye could see that the negative space in the form, was what it meant to be.

There came an understanding that these creative forms had a spiritual counterpart in another plane, a plane the Kogi call the aluna realm, and my role was to contribute to shifting the dream humanity was dreaming, through my life odyssey, to nurture peace, harmony, wellness for the planet: because, as our elder brothers explained, the

Western dream was killing earth, and nature, had always been, and continues to be, my most beloved ally.

At this time, I had successfully transitioned from a business economics major to declare a second major in dance, beginning this at the rather late start age of twenty eight, with new curriculum hoops to jump through, beyond supply and demand. At this time, I was putting myself through school, working as a waitress, but was also tutoring micro and macro economics.

While I received an A+ (yes, I'm really happy with this achievement) in my first required anatomy class, I had a panic attack on the first day of the second required anatomy class when I viewed a cadaver, which sight of, triggered the buried and repressed trauma wiggling its way to the surface due to my shedding of particular paradigms and pursuing my passion for dance, and all that stirs up.

I was told I could take another class in lieu of carving up a cadaver, life drawing, and signed up at the local community college, a powerful shift, which I describe in an earlier writing project, a memoir about PTSD recovery called "I Thrive."

In graduate school, at C.A., although the focus was on dance, I created an interdisciplinary approach collaborating with individuals from the theater department, the music department, the film department, and continued to draw, paint, and write poetry. One of my attempts at submitting the portion of the thesis that required writing was an art installation that took three days to install. I am remembering the school photographer coming, and being somewhat stunned, and asking me why I wasn't in the art program.

Upon graduation from C.A., the then male aspect of myself, who was what we call a "front part" from the orbit of having a sub-divided psyche (which I no longer have.), this aspect, Dylan, went and signed up for art classes at the local community college, asked to be called Dylan, and

well, it became a regular practice, making marks drawing from the model, in tandem, with the dance and physical theater journey.

Additionally, I carved out time for studying tablas, and indian vocals, as well as began a songwriting practice (very on and off.)

Many moons and tides later, I have layers and layers of memory, in the forms of creative archeological artifacts, of this life odyssey.

It is through this I begin to wade, in this Swedish Death Cleaning process, and taking time to sort out how to inventory what still brings me joy to look at and hold, and how to talk about the work, as a part of deepening into understanding this journey (like why does that even matter?)

In the course of the past thirty plus years of crafting creativity with intention, the layers are deep, even though, I have made a regular practice of shedding.

Mediums I have explored include:

- Painting
- Drawing
- Clay Play
- Stone Carving
- Poetry
- Singing and Songwriting
- Memoir
- Dance & Physical Theater
- Costuming, Soundscapes
- Acting, Playwriting, Directing
- Installation
- Film and Videography
- Experimental Work
- Photography
- Performance Art
- Political Protest Art

- Visionary Work, Informal Think Tank Stuff
- Peer Support
- Co-creating Collaborative Paradigms
- Production

The recent work, has to do more with a sense of interfacing creatively with unseen energies, and intelligences with greater insight than two-leggeds alone in interest of supporting the well-being of life, that has more to do with intention, and dreams in context of community and healing in sacred ceremony.

Sacred creativity and being co-creators with earth.

I simply don't have the language to articulate this as an art making creative process, but I know that it is, I think it is the terrain where the ego self manages simple things and the high/wise self along with the kid/basic self rooted to gut, heart, intuition has more space to express in interest of the well-being of all.

It is more about becoming, than anything.

What I discovered, is that given a creative impulse, in the past, the part that was about healing the personal physical body with an awareness of its interconnection to the collective, given a curiosity, an impulse, an urge, a knowing that something that was seeking to come through, or that something that was seeking to be transformed, alchemically transmuted: given the spark, the nature of the spark, this determined the flow, giving life to the form, breathed into existence through the alchemy of the creative spiritual process growing soul.

My motto in this period was, *it is the integrity of the process, not the product*, and this relates to a powerful experience I had in Switzerland, which I set aside, for the journal writing

about this experience I recently discovered. Another pō, not now.

My life has seemed like a dance amongst many expressions down many tributaries eschewing the voices of society that say, you can never become a master of anything, unless, you focus on one thing, you have to do one thing. Even in the arts, specializing, having one voice, one style. Absurd to me, incredibly absurd.

That wasn't the point of this odyssey, this is not where the interest lay, the call was to quest truth, and exist in a way that was in alignment with the nature of the cosmos, as a thing of great beauty, honesty, and integrity.

Process is primary, product is secondary, was another bit of niggling insistence that was alive at that time, and creative processes continue to intrigue me.

The images in this little project, as previously expressed, are from what I call "The Receptionist Series."

My choice, as a creative and maker, has been to keep the art market out of the making, to enjoy the greatest breadth and depth of creative freedom. I also, really didn't believe much in the religion of art, although, it was obvious, for a period, art was my religion, replacing radical religious extremism.

These images emerged at the tail end of a 14-year period where one of my day gigs was answering the phone in a law firm. There were times when it felt like a form of unbearable single-drop water torture, with hours going by without a single person walking by, or a single call, just me, and the plants on the balcony.

It was agonizing, truly.

Things grew worse, when they redesigned the office, and placed me behind a tiny desk, that only had one exit, that was easily blocked, which was a thing that greatly exacerbated PTSD symptoms at that time.

I was told, by the office manager, I could do what I wanted when the phones weren't ringing, and in this period I wrote three books, managed our dance company and its non-profit, entertained clients, served as the office counselor listening to the woes of unruly and exasperating attorneys (indeed, our office had quite the reputation in that regard). I became the plant person when they cut costs by letting go of our plant person, and the lunchtime dog walker when I took pity on the poor office dog who often waited in the car while his owner got a destressing lunch time swim in. I learned much by leaning into that small voice insides prompt to "let the dog lead", rather than attempting to train the old rambunctious aussie who loved to take his frustrations out by chewing up his mistress's bible (that won my heart) in that she favored the other aussie.

I also had a period where I cut up illustration paper into small rectangles and doodled, sometimes from my imagination, sometimes from my dreams, sometimes shamanic journeys, and sometimes I'd draw inspiration from looking at images created by master artists on the internet.

These kekahi mau ki'i (images) are from this period, from the doldrums of tedium and boredom, rapidly and deftly opening my desk draw to hide them, if anyone should happen by. There were also series of songs and poems that came out in reaction to the doldrums of the reception room, which I have happily let go of, and recycled.

Where These Images Have Been Exhibited

The images were shared as a part of the Van Gogh Project in shared shows with my sister Michelle Leilani Cotrina as a part of a series called NECTAR, produced by Cybil Gilbertson, in Santa Barbara, CA, but also, traveled to Brooklyn New York. They were shown as a part of the festival at a boutique theater, Triskelion Arts, low on the artist hierarchy totem pole, close to mother earth. The art was paired with a 20 minute theatrical work drawing from my sister's desire to speak out, about what it is like to have been living mostly in institutions. I realize, that other artists before me have also shunned conventional spaces.

There is a lovely documentation of the event on New York City Radio Live here:

<<https://www.nycradiolive.org/misa/> 2023, August 26>

I asked ChatGPT about my philosophy, my self-perception of the type of work I have created, and where I have shown work, and asked Chat to look through history and see what artists and art movements resonated with the work. Yes, this seems totally crazy, like what could this new toy know about creativity and the arts, right?

I recently came to the awareness that I was born on a new moon, and it is said, that individuals born on a new moon are highly creative and may have difficulty seeing themselves, which is very true of myself.

I discovered through this play with Chat, which yes seems very taboo, that these questions and answers have helped me to attempt to understand who I am, and this journey, in a broadly generalized way.

It pales, of course, well, it doesn't even register in comparison to a chat with my friend and fellow multi-modal maker F., who I think hates ChatGPT, given our shared curiosity and repulsions, but I feel as if it is stretching me in a good sort of way.

When I fed this tool my explorations, philosophy, perspectives about art, and asked what movements, and artists, had similar impulses and notions, Chat suggested looking at the following, because we had some things in common.

Art Movements and Styles that resonate with my odyssey:

- Surrealism
- Dadaism
- Abstract Expressionism
- Conceptual Art
- Performance Art
- Outsider Art
- Spiritual Art
- Multidisciplinary Exploration
- Avant-Garde Vision
- Visionary Art

I would add my own terminology:

- Sacred Performance Ritual
- Transdimensional Metamorphosis
- Alchemical Futuristic Renaissance Cultivator
- Cosmic Co-Creative
- Ancestral Wizard Keeper
- Inner Master Gardening
- Planet Tender and Earth Keeper

I have begun to read about some of these art movements and styles, in that I have not read much art history, and have taken more of an experiential approach absorbing art through witnessing and experiencing.

I can see how some of what Chat suggests could be true. I simply notice what I notice. The archetype of the creative, in the human condition, well, there seems to be some common things that get re-visited.

In exhibiting work, I have always sought to unframe art, with a vision of a different future for humanity, in reaction to a sense of yes, wars, externally, but also internal wars, mudwrestling with my own lovely gremlins and demons, in terms of shadow identities of self, and harnessing art to climb the rungs out of hell, as a perceived set of experiences that were akin to what I initially called being a prisoner in the war camp of childhood. I was not the only one, and they have existed for centuries, and they still exist today, with the impacts rolling forward, generation to generation, messing with the epi-genetics of life.

I had an epic near death experience as small child, and I am just coming to understand, that such experiences can change a person, as of course, can deep trauma.

Certain potentials in the spectrum of human experiences may be activated as survival mechanisms expanding ones sensitivity spectrum, and, after all these years, I am just beginning to understand this, and discover the language to express this.

I have, for the most part, shunned museums and galleries and sought alternative ways and venues for letting the work breathe, and have not altogether embraced the title of “artist”, but rather, have identified with terms such as “butoh in fluid motion”, “alchemist”, “creative”, “maker”, “outsider artist”, “art brut”, “cultural shaman”, and have struggled to define myself.

It is true, in the present moment, now that I perceive my "maker career" is over, and I've said a lot of what I felt wanted to be said in form through creative expression, now that this “career” is over, I felt safe enough to join two local art organizations that only shows framed art.

I find the experience, truth be told, expensive, and highly unsatisfying in terms of letting the work breath, but I do enjoy feeling like I am connecting these days to people on a physical plane as opposed to discovering my people on zoom who mostly live in different cities and different countries.

Now that the pandemic has passed, in this present moment, my hands are back in clay, in a studio, rather than art adventures via zoom, working with earth, water, air, and fire, and there is hope, to return to acting, playwriting, and directing with the locals at our local educational community center that offers FREE classes.

Returning to the task at hand, Chats prompts, and Abstract Expressionism, I mostly knew it by form, digesting Pollock at Moma, an aside to my unframe art antics there.

Abstract Expressionism

While the Abstract Expressionists, arose after WWII, in New York, with did not have a cohesive style, but rather, used abstraction to express strong emotional content, While the emotional content may have been a reaction to the times on an external plane, for myself, it was a reflection of inner worlds, and giving voice to what had not been given voice to yet, and that is the unmasking of what is now known as “ACES too High” with the type of things this body went through in form of _____ that included _____ and harm in _____. A community affair, that spread far, wide, and deep.

DADA

With regard to the DADA movement, I asked chat to compare my thoughts with the DADA movement, and ChatGPT offered the following:

“The Dada movement, which emerged in the early 20th century as a reaction to the disillusionment of World War I and the perceived absurdity of societal norms, shares thematic affinities with Pu‘u's creative journey.

Rebellion Against Norms: The Dadaists sought to dismantle conventional artistic and societal norms, often employing nonsensical and absurd approaches to challenge established values. Similarly, Pu‘u's guerrilla-style installations within established institutions embody a defiance of traditional artistic hierarchies, subverting norms to amplify her message.

Transcendence and Transformation: Both Dada and Pu‘u's work embody transformation, albeit in distinct ways. Dada's transformation was in the upheaval of artistic norms, while Pu‘u's transformation is rooted in personal healing and societal impact.

While 'Iolani Pu‘u's artistic journey resonates deeply with the Dada movement, it is essential to recognize that these affinities emerge within unique cultural, historical, and personal contexts. The parallels demonstrate the universality of artistic responses to complex realities, transcending time and space to communicate profound human truths.”

Surrealism

I asked the same about Surrealism, and was able to identify the seed influence of this, with a college mentor, who had

an experimental theater group, in which I was invited to participate in. She introduced our group of four artists to surrealism automatic writing exercises, and other creative games in the exploration of memory, and automatic writing became a part of my healing toolkit, which was further developed through the use of “morning pages” as described in the book, *The Artists Way* (I can hear the internal protector saying, people are going to think this is really dumb, and gently say, it is okay, we are going with the flow of our curiosity, and that is a good thing!)

Here was ChatGPT’s assessment.

“Surrealism, an avant-garde movement that burgeoned in the early 20th century, champions the liberation of the unconscious mind and the exploration of dreams, a resonance found within Pu‘u’s creative journey.

Exploration of the Unconscious: Surrealists aimed to tap into the depths of the unconscious mind, channeling dreams, fantasies, and irrational thoughts into their art. Pu‘u’s work similarly delves into the realms of the subconscious, infusing her pieces with personal experiences, emotions, and healing processes.

Symbolism and Metaphor: Surrealists employed symbols and metaphors to convey hidden meanings and evoke emotional responses. Pu‘u’s art carries symbolic weight, often embodying layers of meaning that invite viewers to contemplate beyond the surface.

Juxtaposition of Contrasts: Surrealism often juxtaposed seemingly unrelated elements to create new and provocative associations. Pu‘u’s work, particularly her guerrilla-style installations within established institutions, introduces unexpected elements that challenge the viewer’s preconceptions.

Political and Social Commentary: Surrealism wasn’t confined to the realm of dreams; it also held a mirror to

society's contradictions and absurdities. Pu'u's political art and activism align with Surrealism's aim to provoke critical reflection on societal norms and issues.

Healing and Catharsis: Surrealism had a therapeutic underpinning, allowing artists to confront personal traumas and anxieties through their creations. Pu'u's art also emerges from a space of healing, with her work serving as a vessel for processing complex-PTSD and dissociative identity disorder.

Multidisciplinary Exploration: Surrealists embraced a diverse range of mediums, fostering a spirit of innovation and cross-disciplinary exploration. Similarly, Pu'u's engagement with various forms of artistic expression reflects a similar inclination towards breaking conventional artistic boundaries.

Transformation of Reality: Surrealism sought to transform reality by inviting viewers to perceive the world anew. Pu'u's installations and performances challenge the conventional museum environment, inviting viewers to experience art in unexpected ways.

Cultural Identity and Expression: Surrealists often integrated cultural elements into their work to challenge prevailing colonial narratives. Pu'u's exploration of her Hawaiian lineage and Cape Verdean ancestry similarly reflects a reclamation of cultural identity and an assertion of individuality.

While 'Iolani Pu'u's creative odyssey echoes Surrealism's philosophical tenets, it's crucial to acknowledge that these affinities arise within distinct cultural contexts and individual journeys. The shared principles underscore the universality of artistic inquiry, serving as a testament to how art can transcend time and space to illuminate the complex tapestry of the human experience.”

Yes, I can see how some of this may true, but, what does it matter?

You know what really matters? That this creative journey has brought my body healing, healing on a personal level and also an ancestral level. I have decolonized my everything, I know who I am, and I like what I have become. I lean into humility, and grace, and kindness. I am good to people, and generous, but I have also learned how to draw boundaries. My soul has grown in beauty, and I have glorious moments of feeling interconnected to the environment. I love myself. I have moments of happiness.

This is what matters, what type of person I have grown into, not who I am in relation to other creatives across time and space.

I have worked hard, done the work, and I am currently paying it forwrd, helping others.

This, this is the treasure, not the artifacts of the journey, but the breath in the simplicity of this single moment, the awareness of its flow.



What Sets My Work Apart?

I asked ChatGPT this question, of how the intendings of my work is different than artists before me, and also where I might be in the evolution of creative expression. Simple artificially intelligent plastic tasting pellets to gnaw on. I hold these things at a distance, for a wee bit longer, and just let it simmer, and react, giving it to the earth, the sky, the inner realms, for another pō (night), another mahina (moon), another manawa (moment.) I also asked ChatGPT whether or not, given my understanding of my own process, and what I had accomplished, if there would be value in attempting to create a legacy. It said yes, as a voice basically for everything the work has been about, and gave me some ideas on how to work towards that.

Crafting books, that reflect on my journey, is a part of this legacy work, a part of mopping up, and leaving something, and not letting EVERYTHING go to the landfill, or burn in ceremony pile, or whatever way it seeks to be released, not just yet. I already do regret, one series on wood, that went to the landfill, but then again, the space, was very, very welcome. I am grateful at least, for the photos, in that I still enjoy looking at them.

I have definitely formed a felt sense about interacting with ChatGPT, and I also, save this for another book, and look forward to integrating it into this Swedish Death Cleaning process.

Let the odyssey of growing the soul continue, or rather, let it shift. I've grown the soul and done enough work for many lifetimes.

What's left?

The last time when I went on a vision quest, the beginning of summer, the reply from the island was, “medicine woman.”

The arts have been my medicine.

I feel whole, so what is next?

My whole body smiles.

I think, actually, I don’t need chatGPT to tell me what sets the work apart. I know what that is, and it is a Hawaiian thing that was a part of the journey all along, knowing where the guidance has come from. It has never been about ego, or making a name, or accumulating wealth, but about peacemaking, and about service, to earth, and all her relations, about being generous, and building community, and ultimately..

mālama ‘āina, carrying for the land, in an obtuse way.

This is what sets the work apart.

It has been a brave odyssey on Turtle Island, decolonizing my everything, to embrace the Hawaiian I am, in what may very well be my only shot at being a human, but then, shedding even that, to lean into the awareness of this sliver of a singular human soul being a part of a larger collective soul, being a cosmic citizen, with very short stop on a bigger island, earth, Pāpahānaumoku.

Author & Maker

‘Tolani Pu‘u, Misa Miele Mandigo Kelly



*A sweet memory
crafting costumes for Alma.Sama.*